

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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R 101703Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6550
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 2170

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, PINS, NU
SUBJECT: VIEWS OF LUIS PALLAIS ON CURRENT EVENTS

SUMMARY: LUIS PALLAIS DEBAYLE, WHO IS PRESIDENT SOMOZA'S FIRST COUSIN, POLITICAL ADVISER, SPOKESMAN FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY (PLN), AND MANAGING DIRECTOR OF NOVEDADES, GAVE AMB AND DCM A RUNDOWN ON HIS VIEW OF CURRENT EVENTS. HE IS ACTIVELY DISCUSSING SOMOZA'S REFORMS WITH OPPOSITION POLITICIANS AND TRYING TO OVERCOME THEIR RELUCTANCE TO ENGAGE IN POLITICAL DISCUSSION WITH HIM. END SUMMARY

1. DURING LUNCHEON MEETING WITH AMB. AND DCM, LUIS PALLAIS DEBAYLE MADE THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS.

2. INSTEAD OF THE USUAL TWO WEEK BREAK, CONGRESS WILL NOT BE RECONVENING UNTIL THE END OF MAY. THE PURPOSE OF THIS DELAY IS TO PERMIT TIME FOR THE OPPOSITION TO PROVIDE SOME INPUT TO THE ELECTORAL REFORM LEGISLATION. THIS WILL ALLOW ALMOST THIRTY DAYS BEFORE THE LEGISLATION IS
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RETURNED BY THE PRESIDENT TO THE NEW SESSION OF CONGRESS, WHERE IT CAN BE CONSIDERED AND CHANGES MADE. PALLAIS SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN MEETING SECRETLY WITH CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADERS, OCCASIONALLY AT RIDICULOUSLY OUT OF THE WAY LOCATIONS, TO URGE THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTORAL REFORM PROCESS. THESE LEADERS PRIVATELY ACCEPT THE NEED FOR SUCH A DIALOGUE WITH SOMOZA, BUT THEY ARE ALL AFRAID

TO BE THE ONE TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE IN THAT DIRECTION.

3. PALLAIS SAID HE HAD BEEN DISCUSSING WITH THE PRESIDENT AND HAD OBTAINED HIS APPROVAL FOR AN INCREASED DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE LIBERAL PARTY. THIS WOULD ALLOW BROADER GRASS ROOTS PARTICIPATION, AS WELL AS PERMIT THE EXPRESSION OF OPPOSING VIEWS BY LIBERAL PARTY DEPUTIES. HE SAID THAT THE LIBERAL PARTY HAD BEEN A RUBBER STAMP PARTY TOO LONG. THIS IS NOT THE KIND OF PERCEPTION THE NICARAGUAN PUBLIC SHOULD HAVE OF THE LIBERAL PARTY. HE TALKED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ASSIGNING CERTAIN LIBERAL DEPUTIES RESPONSIBILITY FOR TAKING THE LEAD AS SPOKESMEN ON SPECIFIC ISSUES SUCH AS AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, INDUSTRY, ETC. FURTHER, SELECTION OF PARTY CANDIDATES, MAYORS AND JUDGES WOULD BE DEMOCRATIZED, ALTHOUGH THE PRESIDENT WOULD RETAIN VETO RIGHTS.

4. PALLAIS NOTED THE INCREASINGLY CALM ATMOSPHERE IN NICARAGUA, AND SAID THAT HE EXPECTED THIS TO CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME UNLESS A SUCCESSFUL ATTACK BY THE FSLN TOOK PLACE. HE SAID THAT THERE WERE FIVE PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS THAT HAD FACED THE SOMOZA GOVERNMENT, OF WHICH ALL BUT ONE HAD BEEN RESOLVED. THESE ARE:

A) SINCE THE MURDER OF GEN. PEREZ VEGA THERE HAVE BEEN
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NO FURTHER MAJOR FSLN ATTACKS.

B) THE HUNGER STRIKES AND STUDENT SCHOOL OCCUPATIONS
HAD BEEN DEALT WITH IN A MODERATE FASHION.

C) THE OPPOSITION NOW KNOWS THAT THE USG WOULD NOT
ENGAGE IN THE OVERTHROW OF SOMOZA, AND THAT IT WAS PLAYING
A SATISFACTORY NEUTRAL ROLE.

D) THE ECONOMY WAS IN BETTER SHAPE THAN ANTICIPATED,
ALTHOUGH OBVIOUSLY THIS WILL NOT BE A BOOM YEAR.

5. THE REMAINING UNRESOLVED ISSUE IS THAT OF CONFIDENCE.
PRESIDENT SOMOZA REALIZES THAT MANY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT
HE WILL TOTALLY RELINQUISH THE REINS OF POWER IN 1981.
PALLAIS SAID THAT HE HAS BEEN DEVOTING CONSIDERABLE EFFORT
IN ATTEMPTING TO CONVINCE THE OPPOSITION THAT SOMOZA
MEANS WHAT HE SAYS. DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE LIBERAL PARTY
IS ONE WAY OF SHOWING THE CONSERVATIVES THAT THIS IS SO.

6. PALLAIS SAID THAT PRESIDENT SOMOZA HAS BEEN TRYING
TO DO "ALL THE RIGHT THINGS", THAT SOMOZA HAS ACCEPTED

ADVICE FROM THE USG IN VIRTUALLY EVERY RESPECT. PALLAIS WONDERED WHAT THE USG MIGHT DO TO SHOW ITS APPROVAL OF THESE MOVES. FOR EXAMPLE, HE SAID, COULD NOT THE USG PROVIDE THE GN WITH NON-LETHAL WEAPONS, SUCH AS ARMORED HIGH PRESSURE WATER HOSE VEHICLES, AND OTHER ADVANCED CROWD CONTROL EQUIPMENT THAT WOULD BE MUCH BETTER AND MORE ACCEPTABLE THAN TEAR GAS GRENADES?

7. PALLAIS SAID THAT SOMOZA DID NOT WISH TO INVITE THE IAHRC TO NICARAGUA UNDER PRESSURE FROM VENEZUELA. HE SAID THAT HE PERSONALLY THOUGHT THAT THE INVITATION SHOULD BE ISSUED BEFORE THE OASGA IN JUNE, AND HINTED THAT THIS MIGHT BE A POSSIBILITY.
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8. PALLAIS SAID THAT THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE FRUSTRATION AMONG THE GUARDIA NACIONAL AS A RESULT OF PRESIDENT SOMOZA'S ORDERS NOT TO USE FORCE AGAINST DEMONSTRATORS. LIKE ANY MILITARY SERVICE, THE GUARDIA BELIEVES IT COULD PUT DOWN ALL SUCH TROUBLES EASILY AND ARE CHAFFING UNDER THE SOMOZA BIT. PALLAIS DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS IS A SERIOUS MATTER IN TERMS OF GN SUPPORT FOR SOMOZA. HE ADDED THAT HE HAD MET WITH SOME GN OFFICERS, WITH SOMOZA'S BLESSING, TO EXPLAIN TO THEM WHY THE POLICY OF RESTRAINT ON THEIR PART IS NECESSARY AND DESIRABLE.

9. COMMENT: PALLAIS' VIEWS ARE OF INTEREST BECAUSE OF HIS CLOSENESS TO THE PRESIDENT AND HIS CURRENT ACTIVISM IN TRYING TO PROMOTE POLITICAL ACCOMODATION. HIS CHIEF PROBLEM IN ACCOMPLISHING THIS TASK IS THAT HE IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE MORE A SOMOZA MESSENGER THAN A LIBERL PARTY LEADER WITH AUTHORITY IN HIS OWN RIGHT.
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